NOVEMBER 1982 - 5 French francs

The Unesco Courier

WAR ON WAR

The poet's cry

- *Adonis*
- *Ai Qing*
- *Breytenbach*
- *Cardenal*
- *Cortez*
- *Faye*
- *Ginsberg*
- *Labou Tan'si*
- *Mello*
- *Pritam*
- *Shiraishi*
- *Voznesenski*

A time to live...

Photo © Fulvio Roiter, Venice

❼ ITALY

Woman of Valcamonica

What are days for?
Days are where we live.
They come, they wake us
Time and time over.
They are to be happy in:
Where can we live but days?

(From *Days,* by Philip Larkin)

The Unesco Courier

A window open on the world

NOVEMBER 1982 35th YEAR

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Editorial

ON December 10 this year Unesco's Paris headquarters will become for a day an international forum from which a score of poets from every corner of the globe will speak out through their poems against the never-resting forces of oppression and destruction, a platform from which the mingled voices of peace, poetry and liberty can declare "War on War".

To our great regret, limitations of space and time preclude publication of works by all those taking part in this symposium. Nevertheless, in the works of twelve of the participating poets presented in this issue of the Unesco Courier, *some hitherto unpublished, despite differences of tone, emphasis and cultural background, and despite the clouding veil of translation, the anguished, universal voice of the poet can be heard, denouncing war and pleading for fraternity and peace.*

The centenaries of three other poets are also honoured in this issue—those of Subramania Bharati, the great Tamil writer who fought for but did not live to see his country's independence, and Yanka Kupala and Yakub Kolas, both also sturdy fighters for freedom and democracy who have earned the title of "fathers" of Byelorussian literature.

Nor could the Unesco Courier *allow the year 1982 to elapse without marking the anniversaries of two other great figures—St. Francis of Assisi whose 800-year-old message, as the Italian writer Carlo Bo points out, is still applicable today, and the Polish composer Karol Szymanowski whose music is now being accorded the renewed recognition it deserves.*

Finally, we pay all too brief tribute to the memory of the Cuban painter Wifredo Lam, who died in September this year, and whose works exude the electrifying creative force generated by the encounter of different cultures.

Cover: drawing by Roberto Matta
Photo *Unesco Courier*

WAR ON WAR

Poets of the world at Unesco

by Jean-Jacques Lebel

The walls, gardens, and courtyards of Unesco's Paris Headquarters are a showcase for a number of artistic masterpieces which have been donated to the Organization. Among the works which can be admired by visitors and staff members alike are a Calder mobile, murals by Picasso and Glazunov, ceramics by Miró, sculptures by Moore, Giacometti and Soto, and a mural by Matta. But Unesco is also the home of many other works of art which are equally noteworthy. In this issue of the *Unesco Courier*, on pages 4 to 21, we present a selection of these works. Above, modern figurative statue represents a human being reflecting on the world (Peru).

Photo Unesco

IN organizing a poetry evening at Unesco we have accepted the challenge implicit in the incursion of poetry into an official institution. Our task has not been without difficulties, but the challenge is commensurate with the great importance poetry should have and the role it should play in a world in permanent crisis where the fight for culture—never won, and the fight for liberty—never ended, are one. The delayed effects of this incursion may be considerable, especially since poetry festivals are today experiencing a remarkable revival in some parts of the world, perhaps because of the collapse of so many cultural, religious and political values which had been thought to be sound.

The idea was simple and inspiring: that the vision and language of the poet as such should be presented without constraint or censorship on the stage of Unesco, which is by definition supranational. We wanted to provide an opportunity for poetry, with all its spirit, rigour, passion, and complexity, to be read aloud to an audience by its authors in a prestigious setting.

This is the first time that so many great poets of different cultures from all over the world, chosen solely on the grounds of their intellectual quality, have gathered for an event of such importance in such surroundings. The great literary voices of our time are rarely heard beyond the narrow bounds within which creative and utopian thought is confined both in the highly industrialized countries and in the developing world. The societies where shamans and prophets were actually listened to have virtually ceased to exist.

The men and women invited to take part in this event are here in their own right—not as representatives of nations, ethnic groups, political parties, churches, tribes or classes. The concerns of poetry go far beyond the affiliations of the citizen who is often engaged, moreover, in a social struggle. The poet is above all an extraordinary being, an inventor of language who dares to think the unthinkable and say the unsaid. Every poem begins by overstepping the bounds, the blockages and the alienations which

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JEAN-JACQUES LEBEL, *French writer and theatre and film director, is the author of several books including:* La Poésie de la Beat Generation *(Poetry of the Beat Generation),* Le Happening *(The Happening) and* L'Amour et l'Argent *(Love and Money). He is also the founder of the international Polyphonix festival. On behalf of Unesco he has organized the "War on War" manifestation of poets to be held at Unesco headquarters, Paris.*

reduce most of humanity to despair and silence. On this occasion, the poets will propose visionary alternatives to the programmed massacres and planned catastrophes which militaristic futurologists and multinational arms purveyors are seeking to impose on all peoples.

Essentially poetry ought not to raise eyebrows in an institution which sets itself the goal of ending the hegemony of ignorance. The least to be expected is that the structural crisis which permanently convulses all the nations both in their cultural and their economic life should overturn some old habits. It is not those who express themselves in poetry but those who wield the language of war who endanger the survival of mankind. It is not going too far to say that poetry may bring (if only for an experimental period) "imagination to power". If poetry is still there, at the very heart of the questions facing society, it is because the other forms of expression—scientific, political, religious, and administrative—and the other systems of belief, perception and expression, have proved incapable of comprehending the present world crisis.

Meanwhile, poetry uses this crisis as its raw material, drawing its legitimacy from its rejection of *idées reçues,* high-flown speeches, dogmatic lectures, the wooden diction of power, the babel of the media, and the dominance of cultural mediocrity universalized by the audio-visual media. Poetry dissents from industrial norms and customs, it opens up a royal road, the adventure of the indomitable and sovereign spirit. The poet's work restores to its adepts the use of a different kind of word and language, and allows the individual to accept his individuality, an indispensable role in an age of mass phenomena and automation. In the nuclear age it is still possible as it was in Antiquity, both in East and West, in Africa or the Americas, thanks to poetry to learn or learn again how to think freely. It is here that the objectives of modern poetry and those of Unesco are not irreconcilable.

The Director-General of Unesco, Mr. Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, is to be thanked for having welcomed this initiative and for giving a score of such diverse poets an opportunity to declare together *War on War,* to set the ethic of philosophy against military aggression, whatever its source and whatever its pretext. Perhaps this will encourage those who love peace in all countries to join forces against the criminal logic of those who kill. Perhaps this event will inspire the awareness and the process of reflection which is the basis of poetic activity. ■

I know thee...

I know thee O image of terror
I discern thy endless wilderness
My fear-racked tomorrow, and on my cheeks
Stains of the murdered sky
The prints of my two hands
I spell thee out, I revive the flame of thy visage
I squeeze a cry from each reluctant letter
I embrace the lynx and the raven

I embrace the dead
Wakened they leave the sod resuscitated
As ant or book reincarnate
Willingly I wash them
With my tomorrow or my yesterday
True to myself
I outstrip
I fashion the others

Adonis

Poem © Adonis
Translated from the Arabic

Faith

All people have their own space
Breathing is life pulsating
Whether for happiness or sorrow
We are always waiting, hoping for something

The desert has its camel bells
The ocean its siren blasts
A motorbike rides through the street
Each bears a different message

Where is paradise? There is no paradise
Or else it's a minority's freehold
But we—the humble creatures of the earth
Have nought but the faith that yearns in our hearts

But faith itself is dynamic
Sometimes pulling us forward
Or pushing us into pursuit
Remaining ever remote

We are opposed to war
As people daily shed their blood in sacrifice
We beseech an end to hunger
As millions from hunger perish

Nation against nation
Class against class
Religion against religion
Close in battle every passing day

What obscure hand's operation
Turns us powerless and weak,
Can't we gather up our splendid faiths
In a blazing volcanic explosion

Thrusting aloft the whole world
Like bright clouds ascending the sky
Turning fantasies into reality
Creating a genuine paradise?

Ai Qing

Poem © Ai Qing
Translated from the Chinese

The life of the soil

Blessed are the children of Dimbaza,
of Welcome Valley, Limehill and Stinkwater
they die
of sickness, malnutrition, poverty—
for they beautify the prospect for the master's eye
for they escape the jaws of hell
for they clear the Boer's domains
—the Boer and his God—
—the hand of God—
for they are spared from living
for to be black is a political provocation
for you who are black
in the land of blood
of the passbook and the insult of the police dog,
you pollute the land of the Boers
Blessed are the children of Dimbaza
of Welcome Valley, Limehill and Stinkwater
cast down
into the pits, a feast for ants,
a black-toothed smile—
for they receive toys and empty milk-bottles
to furbish their tombs,
toys and silver paper rustling in the wind,
milk-bottles—dried up teats—from which the wind
can conjure sounds
a lure for moles
—for meat is rare—
so that the brats forget
that they are dead
blessed are the dead of Dimbaza
of Welcome Valley, Limehill and Stinkwater
swallowed up
by the earth, for their comings and goings
pass unremarked between mouthfuls
casting no shadow in the sunlight
blessed and holy and sanctified are the moles
the worms and the ants
in the land of the sun
in the land of the Boers
in the land the Masters have given them
for they enrich and beautify the grasslands
so that man flourishes and prospers
grows the fruits of the earth and raises his cattle
waxes fine and strong and white
to the glory of his God

Breyten Breytenbach

Poem © Meulenhoff Amsterdam, 1976
Translated from the Afrikaans

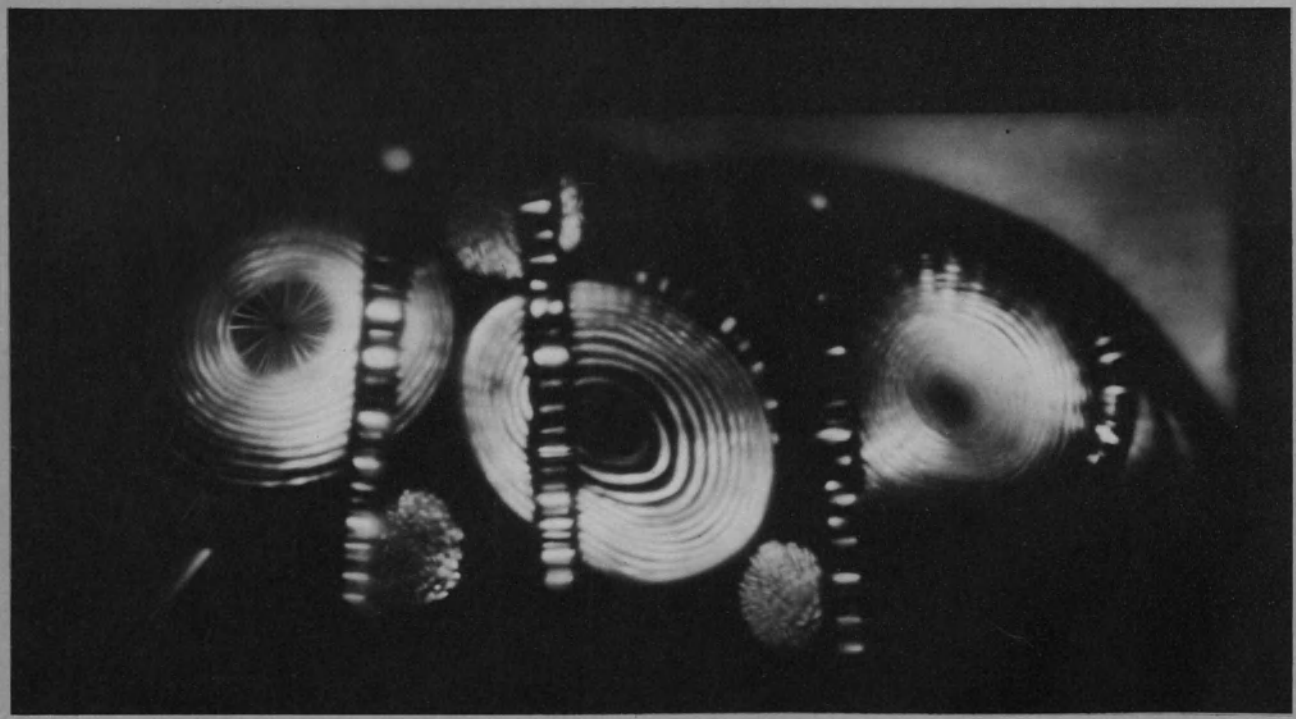
The youngsters of *La Prensa*

In the daily photo line-ups in La Prensa *they appear*
stretched out
Eyes half closed, half-parted lips
As if in laughter, as if in pleasure
The youngsters of the list of shame

Or else from stamp-sized passport snaps they stare
Serious, deadly serious,
The boys who daily swelled the roll of horror

This one went for a neighbourhood stroll
They found him cast aside on a rough patch of wasteland
This one set off to work from his home in the San Judas district
And never returned
Then there was the one who went to buy a Coke at the corner
The one who went to see his girl-friend and never came back
Others snatched from their homes
carried off in army jeeps that disappeared into the night
And later found at the morgue
Or at the roadside in the Cuesta del Plomo
Or on a rubbish dump
Arms broken
Eyes gouged out, tongue severed, genitals torn off
Or who simply were never seen again
Those kidnapped by patrols of the Macho Negro *or the* Cara'e León
And cast heaped up beside the lake behind the Teatro Dario

Of their faces nothing remains
But a bright-eyed glance, a smile, reduced to flat paper
Tiny pasteboard squares their mothers expose like treasure in La Prensa
(An image engraved on the heart's core, on the dear little pasteboard)
The one with the shock of hair
The one with the frightened-deer eyes
The one with the roguish smile
The girl with the melancholy gaze
One in profile or with head inclined
One pensive, one with open shirt



Ladders to the Stars, **a kinetic painting by Frank Malina (United States).**

Photo J.-C. Bernath-Unesco

Others with curls, with hair over face, with a beret
Another, blurred, smiling out from under curlers
In graduation garb
The lass with smiling lips and puckered brow
The girl in the photo sent to her betrothed
The posing boy in the photo given to his fiancée

20, 22, 18, 17, 15 years old
Young people killed for being young because
In Nicaragua it was illegal to be between 15 and 25
And it seemed that Nicaragua would be bereft of youth
Even after the victory I was surprised
When greeted at a gathering by a youth
to find myself asking wordlessly: "How did you escape?"
For once we were afraid of young survivors

You whom the guards seized, the "Beloved of the gods"
As the Greeks used to say, those whom the gods love die young
Others will grow old, but yet, for them, the beloved ones
Will stay forever fresh and young
Smooth-browed, hair ungraying
The fair-haired Roman girl who died, in memory stays ever fair

Yet you, I say, are not of those who do not age
simply because they stay young in the brief memory
Of others who one day will die
You will stay young because there will always be young people in Nicaragua
And because of your deaths, you the countless victims of the daily slaughter,
The young people of Nicaragua will always be revolutionaries
In them you will live again, your lives perpetually renewed
New again, as each day's dawn is new.

Ernesto Cardenal

Poem © Ernesto Cardenal
Translated from the Spanish

***Prometheus Bringing Fire to Men*, a painting by Tamayo (Mexico).**

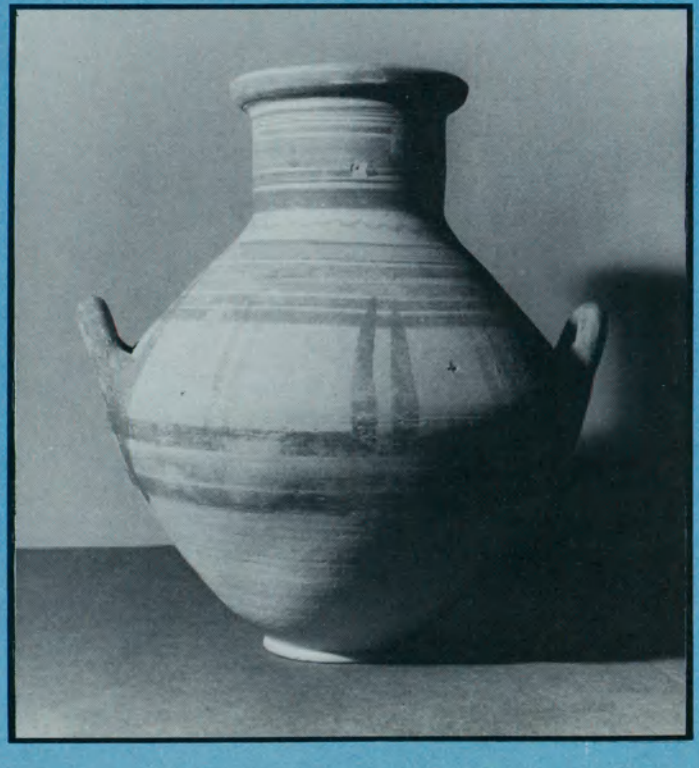
Photo Volta-Unesco

Executed on cowhide, this pyrograph by Lougué Kou depicts scenes from everyday life, sacred animals and masks (Upper Volta).

Photo R. Lesage-Unesco

Stockpiling

The stockpiling of frozen trees
in the deep freeze of the earth
The stockpiling of dead animals
in the exhaust pipes of supersonic rockets
The stockpiling of desiccated plants
on the death root of an abscessed tooth
The stockpiling of defoliants
in the pine forest of the skull
The stockpiling of aerosols
in the pink smoke of a human corpse
Stockpiles
of agent orange agent blue agent white acids
burning like the hot hoof of a race horse on the tongue
Look at it
through the anti-bodies in the body
through the multiple vaccines belching in the veins
through the cross-infection of viruses stockpiled
in the mouth
through the benzine vapors shooting
into the muscles of the stars
through the gaseous bowels of military fantasies
through the white radiation of delirious dreams
Look
this stockpile marries that stockpile
to mix and release a double stockpile of fissions
exploding
into the shadows of disappearing space
Global incapacitations
Zero
and boom
This is the nuclear bleach of reality
the inflated thigh of edema
the filthy dampness in the scientific pants
of a peace prize
the final stockpile of flesh dancing in
the terrible whooping cough of the wind
And even if you think you have a shelter
that can survive this stockpiling
of communal graves
tell me



Vase in form of an amphora dating from the 8th century BC (Cyprus).

Photo Unesco

The Lamb, **by the calligrapher Mashi Shunsoh (Japan).**

Photo J.-C. Bernath-Unesco

Where are you going
with the sucked liver of mustard flint
the split breath of hydrogen fumes
the navel pit of invisible clams
the biological lung of human fleas
the carcinogenic bladder of sponges
words made of keloid scars
poems in the numb section of the chromosomes
Just where do you think you're going
with that stockpile of contaminated stink

Listen
When I think of the tactical missiles plunging
into the rancid goiters of the sun
The artillery shells of wiretapping snakes hissing and vomiting
into the depths of a colorless sky
The accumulation of fried phosphoric pus graffittied
on the fragile fierceness of the moon
The pestering warheads of death-wings stockpiling feathers
in the brain
And the mass media's larval of lies stockpiled
in the plasma of the ears
And the stockpiling of foreign sap in the fluxes
of the blood
And the stockpiling of shattered spines
in chromium suits
under polyurethane sheets
I look at this stockpiling
at this rotting vegetation
and I make myself understand the target
That's why I say I'm into life
preservation of life now
revolutionary change now
before the choking
before the panic
before the penetration of apathy rises up
and spits fire
into the toxic tears
of this stockpile

Jayne Cortez
Poem © Jayne Cortez

Terra-cotta tablet dating from the reign of Ishbi-Irra (2017-1985 BC), the founder of the Isin dynasty (Iraq).

Photo Dominique Roger-Unesco

Torture

I serve notice on all points of the circle of the day
of news which is brought to me hammering
of torturing points from as far away as can be reported
and beatings, neighbours of mine even in their danger
even in kinship with iron no longer endured
when their quadrilateral snaps at the edges

and I shall not cease from watching while they break the edges
nor from listening while near and far they shroud the day
and I shall try to bear word of what is not endured
I shall not muffle the earpiece while I hear the sound of hammering
I shall listen to all that endures domination and danger
and comes to me from the torturing points reported

from opposite points on the circle by that which is reported
I shall hear the broken messenger from the place of the broken edges
where they are scattered and cast to the winds and in danger
where night is abolished after all the points of day
where the blows can no longer be heard on her hammering
so you turn deaf ears to that which is no longer endured

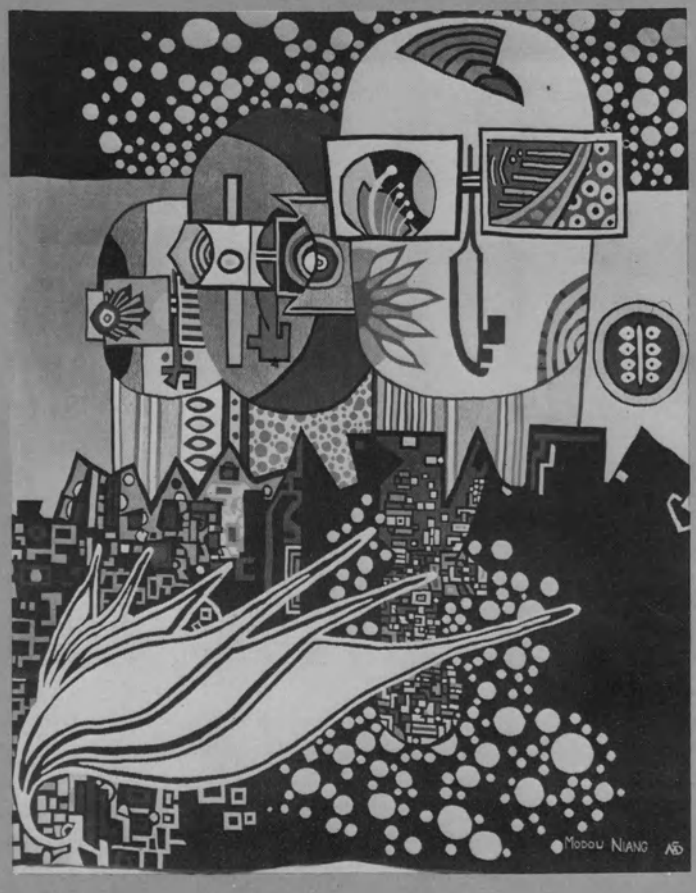
here we shall wait for news of that which is no longer endured
and we shall hear and endure the details reported
letting them drill us, assail us, hammering
I shall outstretch my fingers to the bruised soft edges
head in the night yet walking on the day
in places where they are downtrodden and in danger

and if they are bound or threatened by danger
even shattered by news that cannot be endured
hear it pattering across night and day
bearing the unbearable assault of what is reported
putting the hand in the wound of the edge
where the bruise has come back wounding and hammering

I shall hear the report, I shall go to it hammering
raising before the lordship of danger
the hand at the root of the wound in the edge
and the eyes unblinking at that which can be endured
hearing them come from all points tortured and reported
the bodies that are spring and sustenance of the day

Poem © Jean-Pierre Faye
Translated from the French

Jean-Pierre Faye



The Ndaanaan, **a tapestry by Modou Niang (Senegal).**

Photo J.-C. Bernath-Unesco

Plutonian ode

(excerpt)

Radioactive Nemesis were you there at the beginning
black Dumb tongueless unsmelling blast of Disillusion?
I manifest your Baptismal Word after four billion years
I guess your birthday in Earthling Night, I salute your
dreadful presence lasting majestic as the Gods,
Sabaot, Jehova, Astapheus, Adonaeus, Elohim, Iao,
Ialdabaoth, Aeon from Aeon born ignorant in an
Abyss of Light,
Sophia's reflections glittering thoughtful galaxies,
whirlpools of starspume silver-thin as hairs of Einstein!
Father Whitman I celebrate a matter that renders Self
oblivion!
Grand Subject that annihilates inky hands & pages'
prayers, old orators' inspired Immortalities,
I begin your chant, openmouthed exhaling into spacious
sky over silent mills at Hanford, Savannah River,
Rocky Flats, Pantex, Burlington, Albuquerque
I yell thru Washington, South Carolina, Colorado,
Texas, Iowa, New Mexico,
where nuclear reactors create a new Thing under the
Sun, where Rockwell war-plants fabricate this death
stuff trigger in nitrogen baths,
Hanger-Silas Mason assembles the terrified weapon
secret by ten thousands, & where Manzano Mountain boasts to store
its dreadful decay through two hundred forty millennia
while our Galaxy spirals around its nebulous core.
I enter your secret places with my mind, I speak with
your presence, I roar your Lion Roar with mortal
mouth.
One microgram inspired to one lung, ten pounds of
heavy metal dust adrift slow motion over grey
Alps
the breadth of the planet, how long before your radiance
speeds blight and death to sentient beings?
Enter my body or not I carol my spirit inside you,
Unapproachable Weight,
O heavy heavy Element awakened I vocalize your consciousness to six worlds
I chant your absolute Vanity. Yeah monster of Anger birthed in fear O most
Ignorant matter ever created unnatural to Earth! Delusion
of metal empires! ●●●

Detail of *The Signs of Cadmus*, a tapestry by Aref Rayess (Lebanon).

Photo Unesco

••• *Destroyer of lying Scientists! Devourer of covetous*
Generals, Incinerator of Armies & Melter of Wars!
Judgement of judgements, Divine Wind over vengeful
nations, Molester of Presidents, Death-Scandal of
Capital politics! Ah civilizations stupidly industrious!
Canker-Hex on multitudes learned or illiterate!
Manufactured Spectre of human reason! O solidified
imago of practitioners in Black Arts
I dare your Reality, I challenge your very being!
I publish your cause and effect!
I turn the Wheel of Mind on your three hundred tons!
Your name enters mankind's ear! I embody your ultimate powers!
My oratory advances on your vaunted Mystery!
This breath dispels your braggart fears! I sing your form at last
behind your concrete & iron walls inside your fortress
of rubber & translucent silicon shields in filtered
cabinets and baths of lathe oil,
My voice resounds through robot glove boxes & ingot
cans and echoes in electric vaults inert of atmosphere,
I enter with spirit out loud into your fuel rod drums
underground on soundless thrones and beds of lead
O density! This weightless anthem trumpets transcendent
through hidden chambers and breaks through
iron doors into the Infernal Room!
Over your dreadful vibration this measured harmony
floats audible, these jubilant tones are honey and milk and wine-sweet water
Poured on the stone block floor, these syllables are
barley groats I scatter on the Reactor's core,
I call your name with hollow vowels, I psalm your Fate
close by, my breath near deathless ever at your side
to Spell your destiny, I set this verse prophetic on your
mausoleum walls to seal you up Eternally with
Diamond Truth! O doomed Plutonium.

Poem © Allen Ginsberg

Allen Ginsberg

This votive stone relief representing a Thracian horseman dates from the 2nd century AD (Bulgaria).

Photo J.-C. Bernath-Unesco

A farewell to hormones

A man of dust
With eyes of dust
Ever fixed on the sun

Teeth of dust
Wherein lurk powder-flies
A dusty sprayed-on smile
Skin of dust
Rocketed to the outworn moon
Of racism
Apollo ninety-three
Made in Madness
Made in Hatred
Made in Vanity

The dust of shame
The hollow laugh of silence
Falling on man woman and child
On your hunter's powder-horn
On your lipstick civilization
On your heart-shaming technology
On your Herculean labouring
To construct
This monstrosity of monstrosities
And then to die
Tied to the assembly-line

Death is no longer to die
And to die is not even to bid
A last farewell to hormones

Sony Labou Tan'si

Poem © Sony Labou Tan'si
Translated from the French

Metal sculpture by Eila Hiltunem is a monument to the Finnish composer Sibelius (Finland).

Photo Dominique Roger-Unesco

The covenant

Article 1.
It is decreed that henceforth truth exists,
that henceforth life exists
and that hand in hand
all shall strive for the true life.

Article 2.
It is decreed that every day of the week,
even the greyest of grey Tuesdays,
shall have the right to become a Sunday morning.

Article 3.
It is decreed that, from this moment on,
there shall be sunflowers at every window
and that each sunflower shall have the right
to open in the shade;
that each window shall stay day-long open
on to the green lawns where hope grows.

Article 4.
It is decreed that man
never again
shall doubt his fellow-man.
That man shall put his trust in man
as the palm-tree confides in the wind,
as the wind confides in the air,
as the air confides in the blue span of the sky.

Special codicil
Man shall put his trust in man
as one child puts his trust in another.

Article 5.
It is decreed that man
be freed from the yoke of falsehood.
That never again will he need
the breastplate of silence
or the chain-mail of words.
He will sit at table
with unclouded eye
for truth will be served
before the meal's end.

Article 6.
It is laid down that for ten centuries
shall be fulfilled Isaiah the prophet's dream:
together wolf and lamb shall graze
feeding upon the same sweet fresh of dawn.

Article 7.
Established by irrevocable decree,
the endless reign of justice and of light
now shall begin, and joy, a generous standard,
unfurled shall float within the people's soul.

Poem © Thiago de Mello
Translated from the Portuguese

Gallo 1978, an acrylic painting by Mariano Rodriguez (Cuba).

Photo J.-C. Bernath-Unesco

Article 8. *It is decreed that mankind's greatest dolour*
has been and forever shall be this: to love
though powerless to give the loved one love,
to know that it is water's gift alone
to bring the plant the miracle of flower.

Article 9. *It is permitted that the daily bread*
shall bear for man the sweat-drop mark of toil.
Yet foremost and forever it shall keep
the bake-warm aftertaste of tenderness.

Article 10. *It is accorded that no matter who,*
no matter at what moment of his life,
may garb himself in white.

Article 11. *It is decreed that, by definition,*
man is a loving creature,
that is why he is beautiful,
surpassing in beauty the morning star.

Article 12. *It is decreed that nothing shall be obligatory or prohibited*
Everything shall be allowed,
especially playing with rhinoceroses
and walking in the afternoon
with a huge begonia for a buttonhole.

Special codicil *One thing alone shall be forbidden:*
loveless loving.

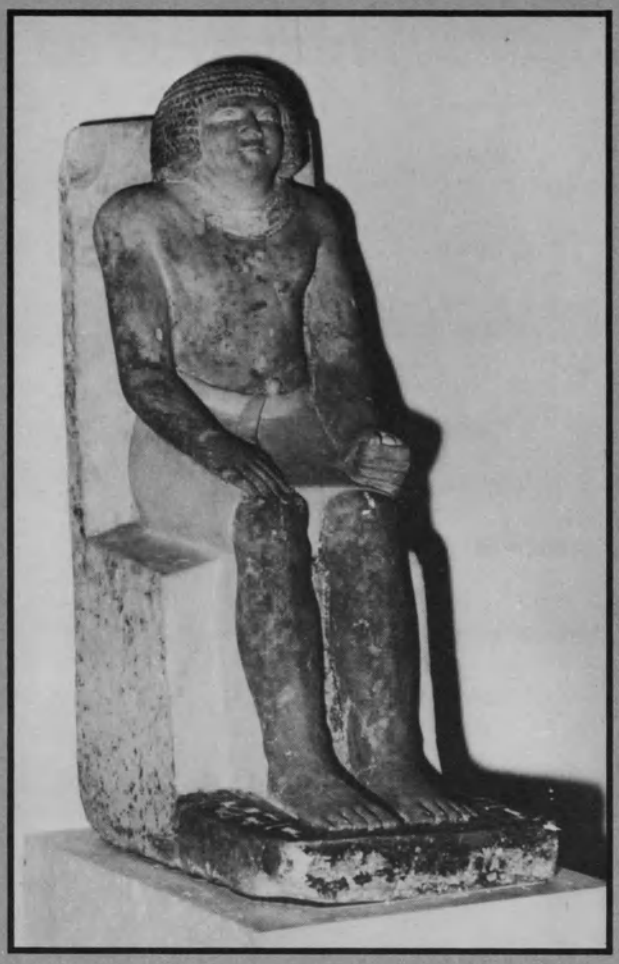
Article 13. *It is decreed that money*
shall no longer have the power to buy
the morning sunlight of the days to come.
Banished from the arsenal of fear
it shall become the sword of brotherhood
defending the right to sing
and the right to fête the new-dawned day.

Final Article. *The word "liberty" shall be proscribed,*
expurgated from all dictionaries,
banned from the treacherous marshlands of speech.
From henceforth
liberty, like fire or like a stream,
or yet like seed-corn,
shall be a limpid living thing
that shall forever dwell
in the heart of man.

Thiago de Mello

Diana the Huntress, a mosaic from the ancient Roman city of Thysdrus (modern El Djem in Tunisia). It dates from the end of the 2nd century AD (Tunisia).

Photo R. Lesage-Unesco



Statue of 'Fty Mhy (5th dynasty, 2400 BC) discovered on the site of the pyramids at Giza (Egypt).

Weeping Woman, a painting by Guayasamin (Ecuador).

Photo Unesco

Khmer statue, late 12th or early 13th century AD (Democratic Kampuchea).

Photos Dominique Roger - Unesco

My address

today i have Erased the number of my house
the name of the street where i live.
i have changed the direction of every road.
if you must find me now
just knock on any door in any street
in any city anywhere in the world.
this curse, this benediction:
wherever you find freedom is my home.

Amrita Pritam

Poem © Amrita Pritam

Football player

He's a football player
Kicks a ball, everyday.he kicks a ball
One day
He kicked love up high in the sky
And it stayed there
Because it didn't come down
People thought it must be the sun
The moon or a new star

Inside me
A ball that never comes down
Hangs suspended in the sky
You can see it become flames
Become love
Becoming a star

Kazuko Shiraishi

Poem © Kazuko Shiraishi and Shichosha Publishing Co.
English translation by Ikuko Atsumi et al. © New Directions Publishing Corporation

Goya

I am Goya!
My eye-sockets craters pecked by the
(crow-black) enemy, flying
over the naked plain.

My name is grief.
I am the voice
Of pocked war, charred beams of burnt cities scattered
over the snow of nineteen-forty-one

My name is hunger.
I am the scarred throat
Of the hanged peasant woman, her body swinging ringing like a bell,
over the empty square...

My name is Goya!
(O the grapes
Of revenge!) Salvoes of artillery shattered—
I swept back to the West
the ashes of the uninvited guest!

And into the commemorative sky I drove
stars
Strong as nails.
Goya is my name.

Andrei Voznesenski

Poem © Andrei Voznesenski
Translated from the Russian by Brian Featherstone

Poetry before and after Hiroshima

by Stephen Spender

'POETS adore ruins," Auden wrote, and this is a warning to bear in mind when considering the attitude of poets to war.

Historically they have been, to say the least, ambivalent about it. War forms the subject of most epic poetry and of much poetic drama, including Shakespeare's historical plays, and *Troilus and Cressida.* In *Troilus and Cressida,* it is true, the Grecian warriors are depicted as half-wits, war as senseless violence. But in the highly patriotic historical plays war is patriotism incandescent, soldiers are, for the most part, manly and heroic.

In the past, indeed right up to the First World War, war has had great appeal for poets. Vergil begins the *Aeneid* with the words "Arma virumque cano" (I sing of arms and the man) connecting arms with man, almost as though men become most man in war. War in poetry is traditionally a kind of stripping those who fight down to the essential man, like nudes in painting.

The reason why poets have been so attracted by war is because it provides experiences of actual living in which people are reduced to the elemental conditions of their existing: death; the sense of being at once isolated and belonging to a community; the cause worth living and dying for, camaraderie—war provides a terrible testing in which, through being made aware of their courage or cowardice men realize some significant truth about the quality of their own physical and spiritual nature which would never be revealed in years of peace.

Poets, when they are being poets and not just like other men, see life in relation to these ultimate realities. However, most people do not do so, except in times of crisis. They spend most of their lives living from day to day, occupied on the treadmill of work or being what is called "worldly", impervious to the ultimate realities of human existence.

But war is a situation in which everyone, or nearly everyone, is brought face to face with life and death. Thus it breaks down the barriers between the poet and the public, poetry and the routine of material living: barriers which mean that in times of peace and material prosperity the poet may well be writing about a world of whose existence the great majority of people are scarcely aware. But if, in times of war, a poet writes about heroism, destruction, faith, the sacred cause, religious need, camaraderie, people recognize their own condition in his poems. War can indeed produce the sensation of life itself, as Tolstoy in his epic *War and Peace,* shows in his description of Prince Andrew lying wounded on the battlefield and contemplating his own death. War also has given peoples the sense of sharing a common dream of their nationhood. The *Aeneid* is about the dream of Rome shared by the soldiers and fighters living and dying for it under the leadership of Aeneas, who is the pattern of military and civic virtues.

Nevertheless, poets in the past whilst being very open to the attraction of war as a kind of lived and shared poetic drama have, in the long run, been repelled and disgusted by it. They have seen that it leads to terrible human suffering, senseless brutality, the breaking up of ties of affection between families and friends, and the destruction of those maintained conditions of civilization which are the essential basis of art. Civilization requires peace, and ultimately, war leads to barbarism. The *Iliad* ends in dust and ashes. In Shakespeare's *Henry VI* there is a terrible scene of civil war in which a father finds dead on the battlefield the corpse of an enemy which, when he turns it over, he discovers to be that of his own son: a scene perhaps echoed by the greatest English poet of the First World War—Wilfred Owen—in his poem *Strange Meeting,* where immediately after his death a soldier has a conversation with a fellow soldier killed in battle at the same instant as he himself was killed, who at the end of the poem says, "I am the enemy you killed, my friend."

Historically I think then that poets have vacillated betweeen praise for war, because it makes people conscious of finalities, and revulsion at the brutality, rapine, waste, boredom, destruction and corruption. In the First World War the poets passed rapidly from the phase of seeing the war as an awakening from the leaden materialist lethargy of the late nineteenth century, with its values of scientific and industrial "progress", to the phase of horror and disgust at the killing and destruction, and the boredom.

In 1914, in Germany, Rilke, the least militarist of poets, saw war as a great upsurge of sacred life against the materialist century, just as in England Rupert Brooke saw it as a cleansing from the moral decadence of the England of the early part of the twentieth century. In the sonnets Brooke wrote at the outbreak of the war he characterized the young Englishmen who rushed to offer their lives to their country as "swimmers into cleanness leaping".

STEPHEN SPENDER *is a noted English poet who first won recognition in the 1930s as one of a group of writers and poets including his friend W.H. Auden. He is also the author of criticism, drama, fiction/translations and an autobiography* World Within World *(1951). His most recent book is* The Thirties and After: Poetry, Politics, People, *published by MacMillan, London in 1978.*

But the immense scale of the destruction soon put an end to this. By 1916 the two best English poets fighting in the trenches—Wilfred Owen and Siegfried Sassoon—were writing poems describing the horror, destruction and suffering produced by the war and attacking the triumph of the hideous war machine over the humanity of the soldiers fighting on the Western front, the wickedness of the political leaders on both sides who did nothing to stop the slaughter, the callous insensitivity of old men and civilians at home who accepted complacently the sacrifice of the lives of the young.

These poets divided the English into the heroic victims, who were the soldiers at the front, and the scarcely conscious civilians of the home base. They no longer cared whether the victims were English, French or German soldiers. For them the real enemies were not the German soldiers but the militarists, politicians and arms manufacturers on both sides. When Sassoon and Owen, and other officers like them, went home on leave, they found that they hated their civilian fellow Englishmen. They no longer felt that England was home. Home was their fellow soldiers on the Western front. They had come to hate war and knew themselves to be pacifists, yet more important to them than their pacifism was that, so long as the fighting continued, they should endure horrors with their fellow soldiers.

In this one can see that, despite their detestation of war, the poets did feel that the suffering resultant from it had made the soldiers in the trenches, whether English, French or German, superior to those who did not fight. Here was a remnant of the feeling that war brings out human virtues in those who participate in it. To Wilfred Owen, every soldier was Christ.

This attitude of the English war poets became a kind of poetic orthodoxy which lasted into the Second World War in which many poets fought while hating war yet feeling that they should share the camaraderie and agony of fellow soldiers. Anti-fascism—the fact that they were fighting in defence of individual freedom against Hitlerism—perhaps qualified this attitude, but not very much. The poetry of anti-fascism was not written by combatant poets in the armies of the democracies but by poets of the resistance, such as Aragon and Eluard, in France.

Hiroshima entirely altered all this. From June 1945 onwards there was no more soldier/pacifist poetry. War had become totally dehumanized. The only poetry that could be written about war now was about the total inhumanity of the technology which could destroy whole cities, countries, perhaps the world as we know it. The anti-war poetry of today is that of man almost helpless against the totally destructive powers of his own inventing. It is written with certainty that there can be no heroic, just, comradely phase of any future war. War now means nothing but destruction. The threat of the extinction of all civilized values, perhaps of the human race and all life on earth.

The poetry of poets who try to write about this situation seems to be mainly of two kinds. Firstly, that of poets who make metaphors of destruction, as does Jayne Cortez here in her poem "Stockpiling":

The stockpiling of frozen trees
in the deep freeze of the earth
the stockpiling of dead animals
in the exhaust pipes of supersonic rockets
the stockpiling of desiccated plants
...etc.

It is a magnificent effort to make poetry out of total inhumanity, the metaphors having the effect of making the forces of nuclear destruction accessible to the imagination. But when, at the end of the poem, Cortez declares:

I look at this stockpiling
at this rotting vegetation
and I make myself understand the target
that's why I say I'm into life
preservation of life now
revolutionary change now

it is not wholly convincing. The poet has been all too successful in inventing metaphors for the inhuman scientific progress of destruction for us to feel that "being into life" has much chance to save the world; and "revolutionary change" seems almost pathetically vague. On the other hand, what alternative to the technological inhumanity is there except brave assertions of life and humanity? We find these in the beautifully sensitive "Football Player" of Kazuko Shiraishi and in the declarations of faith in humanity of Ferlinghetti :

...and I am awaiting
perpetually and forever
a renaissance of wonder

Anti-war poetry is not only against war. It states the predicament of life against destructive technology ■

Photo Unesco

'TO BE CALLED MEN'

Kupala and Kolas, poets of liberty

by Maksim Tank

THE years between 1905 and 1907 were turbulent, shaking the feudal order to its foundations. Harbinger of freedom and democracy, the wind of change swept over Byelorussia, fanning the hopes of the millions living in desperate poverty and backwardness, in what was familiarly known as "that godforsaken corner" of the Tsar's domains.

It was during the same period, at the height of the revolutionary storm, that two voices were heard, shouting into the wind the pent-up, centuries-old anger of the peasants against their oppressors, and proclaiming their demand for a radical new order of things. The voices belonged to the young poets Yanka Kupala and Yakub Kolas, whose centenary is being celebrated in 1982.

My bread is the fruit of my own toil,
I endure insults, the voices shouting at me.
Holidays? I hardly know what they are,
I'm just a peasant, a miserable muzhik.
But today and tomorrow, and for the rest of my days,
Long though my life may be, or short,
There's one thing, brothers, I'll not forget.
A peasant I may be, but a man, *too.*

These lines by Kupala are echoed by Kolas:

Muzhik, *it's true, but no fool, for all that;*
I know my day will come.
Quiet though I may be now, not daring to answer back,
One of these days I'll
Shout, Brothers! to arms!

With such protests, Kupala and Kolas broke the silence which had been imposed for so long on the downtrodden Byelorussian peasantry, articulating the conditions of their daily life, their cares and suffering: the hungry springtimes when the last crumb of bread had been eaten; the mare staggering with exhaustion in the shafts; the wailing children; the worn-out and emaciated women. "My tongue is as dry as a bone in my mouth", says one verse, and another: "Poor devils, we are, our heads in the noose... work in the fields... tears at home..."

It is not hard to understand the importance of the role played by the verse of Kupala and Kolas—linked as closely as it was to their people's aspirations and to the problems of their time—in the renaissance of Byelorussian letters. A renaissance indeed, because although the country had a long literary tradition reaching back to the early sixteenth century, with its origins in the works of the great humanist and philosopher Frantisk Skorina, it had also been condemned by history to a long, dark age of occupation by the Poles during which all printed matter in the Byelorussian language was prohibited and the feudal overlords imposed a campaign of assimilation on the people. And if, at the end of the eighteenth century, Byelorussia had been reunited with Russia—a country to which it had been linked from time immemorial by historical, cultural and linguistic ties—it was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that what amounted to little more than descriptive, written-down folklore began to evolve into a new national literature. The distinctive contribution by Kupala and Kolas was to enrich this new literature with progressive and revolutionary ideas, which they expressed to artistic perfection.

Despite its concern with the sombre realities of the times, the poetry of Kupala and Kolas carries a heartening and thought-provoking message. The way we live now, it says, is barely an improvement on death; struggle offers the only chance of escape. This leitmotif of revolt is nowhere more apparent than in Kupala's "Who goes there?", which Maksim Gorki, who translated it into Russian, described as "an eloquent, austere piece of verse."

Who goes there, in the marshland and the forest,
Goes in that enormous crowd?
The Byelorussian people go there!
What are they bearing, on their skinny shoulders,
Lifting in their skinny hands
— Injustice and lies, they bear!
Where are they carrying all the lies and the injustice,
Taking them to show to whom?
— To the whole world, to show!
But who was it who roused these millions from their sleep,
Who said, Take up your burden now, and go?
— Misery and sorrow taught them so!
But what is it they seek, then, the oppressed of the ages,
The blind and the deaf, what do they seek?
— To be called men!

In its original language, we seem to hear in the rhythm of this poem the heavy, breathless tread of a huge crowd of people, carrying on their shoulders an immense load. *"To be called men..."* The laconic phrase recalls the insult inflicted on a people far too long subjected to the most terrible of deprivations and denied the exercise of the most elementary political and social rights. But *"To be called men..."* is also a demand, stemming from a new self-awareness. However it was interpreted, the poem made a powerful impression on the people, and found its way to all the corners of Tsarist Russia. And if, at the time, "Who goes there?" was translated into ten languages, it is worth noting that in the special centenary edition of the works of the two poets, it is translated into no fewer than eighty, including Arabic, Chinese, English, French, German, Hindi, Japanese and Spanish...

MAKSIM TANK *is "People's Poet" of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic. His work has been rewarded by the award of the Lenin Prize and State prizes of the Byelorussian SSR. He is a member of the Academy of Sciences of the Byelorussian SSR, a secretary of the governing council of the USSR Writers' Union, and Chairman of the Writers' Union of the Byelorussian SSR.*

Yanka Kupala (left) and Yakub Kolas photographed during the 1920s.

Photo © Fotokhronika, Tass, Moscow

Familiar with the folklore of their country, transforming imagery into symbols, linking genuine feeling with an impressive breadth of vision, Kupala and Kolas opened the eyes of their people to spiritual horizons which lay far beyond the frontiers of Byelorussia, without losing sight of national realities. At the same time, their innate creativity, nourished by the oral traditions of the rural population, enabled them to reveal the richness, the freshness and the inexhaustible resources of their native language. Small wonder, then, that great masters of literature such as Gorki, Sholokhov, Aragon and many others have paid tribute to the contribution made by these two Byelorussian poets to the heritage of world literature.

Kupala and Kolas were not linked merely by their work and the gift which they shared of "conversing with all their countrymen". The circumstances of their lives were very similar. Both born in 1882, they each learned at a very early age what it was really like to till the earth, to work on the land without possessing the smallest plot of one's own, to travel from place to place in search of temporary employment. The fathers of each of them died young, worn out by the struggle against poverty.

And it was not by chance that both poets chose pseudonyms of popular origin. Ivan Dominikovich Lutsevich became "Yanka Kupala" in evocation of the festival which bore that name. Konstantin Mikhailovich Mitskevich selected "Yakub Kolas", thus commemorating the ear of grain *(kolas)* produced by his native soil.

Both poets fought for the freedom of their people; and both experienced the rigours of censorship and Tsarist oppression, in their literary work and in their public activities. In 1908, Yakub Kolas received a prison sentence of almost three years, for having taken part in an illegal congress of teachers.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find similar themes, and even similar images, in their writing, although each poet has his own distinctive personality. Kupala is the more lyrical of the two. Some of his poems, such as *Kurgan* (Burial Mound), *Mogila I'va* (The Lion's Grave) and *Ona i ja* (She and I), have a romantic tone; others are taut with dramatic tension. His inventions, images and symbols are frequently audacious. Kolas, on the other hand, is a more down-to-earth poet, with a closer eye for detail:

The villages have a sad look,
Heartbreaking it is, to see them.
In a backyard—firewood, a few planks
And a heap of rubbish.
A rickety cross at the roadside,
A pile of dry poplar trees...
Silence, a sort of boredom as in a prison
Or in a cemetery somewhere.

As well as a poet, Kolas was also, throughout his life, a distinguished prose-writer, noted particularly for his collection of short stories *Skazki Zhizni* (Tales of Life) and for his great trilogy *Na Rostanjakh* (At the Crossroads).

During the First World War, both poets were conscripted into the Tsarist army and served outside Byelorussia. Understandably, they greeted the October Revolution in 1917 with great enthusiasm, and celebrated the event in a number of poems. But the vicissitudes of the post-war period were such that part of Byelorussia remained under Polish occupation until 1939. On the other hand, in 1919, Eastern Byelorussia became one of the fifteen constituent republics of the USSR. Factories were built; roads were traced across the landscape; and the scourge of illiteracy, which had been rife throughout the population, was eradicated. The children of the poor were now to be found in universities and other educational establishments. Theatres were created, and crowds flocked, as they still do today, to see Kupala's *Pavlinka*, and other dramatic works by the two poets. Both were among the first members of the Byelorussian Academy of Sciences and Letters, the foundation of which launched a new era in the country's economic, scientific and cultural life.

In 1941, Nazi Germany attacked the Soviet Union. Kupala and Kolas issued passionate calls for popular resistance against the invader, in stirring poems such as the former's *Belorusskim Partizanam* (To the Byelorussian partisans). Despite the destruction by the enemy of entire towns and villages, and the suffering of the people (one Byelorussian in four did not survive the war), there was no surrender. Yanka Kupala, unhappily, did not live to see his country's victory, but died in 1942. Yakub Kolas lived until 1956, and thus witnessed the revival which began with the liberation, playing an active part in public life and expressing his creativity up to the very end.

Today, the works of Kupala and Kolas are published in impressive quantities. Poetic gatherings are organized in their memory. Streets, squares, schools, libraries, theatres, institutions of various kinds and even ships bear the two poets' names. Indeed, the names of Yanka Kupala and Yakub Kolas will always be linked with that of their country, to which they unstintingly devoted their exceptional talents. ■

Drawings © Isabelle Maury, Paris

Born in the same year a century ago, the two great Byelorussian poets Ivan Dominikovich Lutsevich (Kupala) and Konstantin Mikhailovich Mitskevich (Kolas) took their pen names from local fertility myths, thus expressing their love of their native land and their desire to see their country free and born again. Kolas, which means an ear of grain, evokes the legend of the days when the Byelorussian countryside was no more than an expanse of sand, marsh and untamed grassland. Dropped by a bird or carried on the wind or by a horse, a grain of barley took root and flourished in this wasteland, thus providing man with his daily bread. Even today, in Byelorussia, at harvest-time, the first handful of corn harvested is ceremonially knotted around the farmer's waist (see drawing left). Kupala, from the word *koupat*, meaning to bathe, is the name of a pagan midsummer festival on which pagan "weddings" were consummated. On the eve of Kupala unmarried peasant girls would each fashion two circlets of sweet clover which they threw into a nearby river. If the two circlets floated side by side, the maidens would soon be wed (drawing opposite page). That same night the peasants would set out in search of a fern in flower. Tradition had it that the fern, the symbol of happiness, flowered only once a year, on the eve of Kupala.

Saint Francis giving his cloak to a rich man fallen on hard times, one of a cycle of 28 scenes from the Saint's life in the Upper Church at Assisi, by Giotto (1300).

Photo © Alinari-Giraudon, Paris

TAKING flight into the realms of pure fantasy, let us imagine that one day Saint Francis knocked at our door. What would happen? No doubt he would begin by telling us about his own times and what he had tried to accomplish during his life. And this would be the point at which some real problems would arise.

Let us imagine how the conversation would continue. Saint Francis would remind us of his guidelines for living and right away we would come up against great difficulties. No doubt he would speak of poverty and invite us to live the life of the poor, advising his brothers to accept neither church nor even the poorest house; he would preach the Christianity of Christ, the Christ of the Gospels who is the inspiration of the pilgrim church of the world, of that church which is in eternal movement because it pursues the notion of the spiritual prey, souls that wait to be educated and helped, of that church which over six centuries does not appear to have gone very far in that direction.

And what about us? We are still caught up in a totally opposed vision, one which cannot be reconciled with this path of adversity and difficulty. Our goal is to live in houses which are ever more comfortable and richly appointed, to pray in churches which best suit our tastes. Above all, we strive to make of this same religion, of this religion which links us through Saint Francis to Christ, a centre of appeasement, of satisfaction and, indirectly, of lassitude. We enter the church to find peace; Saint

CARLO BO, *Italian writer and literary critic, has played a leading role in a number of avant-garde literary movements, including hermetism, in which such great Italian poets as Ungaretti and Montale have taken part. He teaches French language and literature at Urbino, where he has been rector of the university since 1950.*
This article is taken from a longer study in which the author, writing from the standpoint of a Christian of the West, calls for a return to the essentials of Franciscan teaching—love, peace and brotherhood between men and between the peoples of the world.

From riches to rags

FEW periods in history and few places in the world could have seemed less propitious than the Italy of the end of the twelfth century for the birth of the "seraphic saint", the man whose life mission was "to follow the teaching of Our Lord Jesus Christ and to walk in his footsteps". For when Francesco di Pietro di Bernardone was born, in 1182, at Assisi in Umbria, the peninsula was torn with strife—Pope fought Emperor, Guelph fought Ghibelline, bourgeois fought noble and city fought city.

The man who was later to found a great religious order whose first rule was poverty was born rich. His father, Pietro di Bernardone, was a wealthy cloth merchant, and with his good looks, his riches and his romantic notions of chivalry, acquired from the *chansons* of the French troubadours, Francesco soon became the acknowledged leader of the worldly young blades of Assisi.

Thirsting for knightly adventure, in 1202 he took part in the war between Assisi and Perugia but was taken prisoner at the battle of Ponte San Giovanni at which Assisi suffered a crushing defeat. Released a year later he became seriously ill, but on his recovery he set out, in 1205, to join the papal army. This journey was to be his "road to Damascus". He had got no farther than Spoleto when he had a vision in which he was instructed to return to Assisi and await a call to another form of knighthood.

On his return to Assisi, in preparation for this call, he devoted himself to prayer and solitude. He made a pilgrimage to Rome where he experienced poverty at first hand, mingling with beggars and himself begging for alms.

The call which he had been so patiently awaiting came to him at the ruined chapel of San Damiano on the outskirts of Assisi. One day a voice from the crucifix above the altar commanded him: "Go Francis and repair my ruined house". Taking these words literally, he returned home, took as much cloth from his father's shop as he could load on to his horse and rode to Foligno where he sold both cloth and horse.

On his return he tried to give the money to the priest of San Damiano, but his enraged father hauled him first before the civil authorities and then before the bishop. Before the startled prelate's eyes he stripped off his clothing which he handed to his father saying, "Until today I called Pietro di Bernardone my father; henceforth I can truly say: Our Father which art in heaven". Whereupon the astonished bishop gave him a cloak to cover his nakedness and he set off to live in the forests of Mount Subasio.

With family ties broken and material goods renounced he was free to devote himself to God's work. Dressed now in rough hermit's garb he set about restoring first the chapel at San Damiano and then the chapel of Santa Maria degli Angeli, known because of its small size

If Saint Francis came to call

Would the message of the 'seraphic saint' be heeded in the modern industrial world?

by Carlo Bo

Francis enters it so as to reinforce his desire to fight against himself, against everything which might give him a moment of tranquility, a breathing-space, oblivion.

It is clear that, broached in this fashion, our hypothetical conversation offers no possibility of mutual understanding, the Saint continuing to walk the highways and byways of the world (certainly in another form, dressed differently, and with the face of an asocial, marginal figure condemned by a society that excludes him). And yet the first words he pronounces in our imagination and across centuries of Catholic tradition are simply these: "the spirit of poverty."

The very principle of our economy is in contradiction with the evangelical ideal of Saint Francis. It is not for nothing that his discourse is centred on negation: not to possess, not to hold, not to accept. We are impelled to give, to render what we give acceptable and to discover those who are poorer than ourselves.

The theme of true happiness is precisely this: happy and serene is the man who, stranded far from home on a stormy night, knocks in vain at the door of the convent. Saint Francis makes of this domestic parable the main instrument of his genius for spiritual individuation—man finds his salvation in the very moment that the world abandons him.

In the depths of misfortune, continues the disconcerting Saint Francis, this trouble-maker we have welcomed into our home, we discover the unique sign of salvation. For the Saint hope does not come from us or from any other man, but ▶

Photo © *Télérama*, Paris

Saint Francis' love of nature has come to be typified by the story of how he exhorted his friends the birds to sing the praises of God. He regarded nature as the mirror of God and his sense of brotherhood which extended not only to his fellow men but to all God's creatures found expression in his famous *Cantico di frate sole* (Canticle of Brother Sun). This poem is not only one of the most beautiful in Italian literature, it is also one of the first to be written in the vernacular. Until the 13th century almost all Italian literary work was written in ecclesiastical Latin. When Saint Francis wrote the *Cantico* in 1225, not long before his death, he pointed the way to such men as Guido Cavalcanti and Guido Guinizelli towards the "dolce stil novo", the "sweet new style" of poetry whose praises Dante sang in the *Divine Comedy*. Left, Graham Faulkner as Saint Francis in Franco Zeffirelli's film *Francis and the Way to the Sun*.

as the *Porziuncola,* which was later to become the centre of the Franciscan Order.

There, on the feast of St Matthias, on February 24, 1208, he heard the words from the Gospel with which Christ sent forth his apostles: "Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves, for the workman is worthy of his meat. And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide until ye go thence." At last the meaning and purpose of his life seemed crystal clear. Although not an ordained priest, he began preaching to his fellow townsmen, quickly attracting around him a band of disciples. On April 16, 1209, the rule of life he had drawn up for them received papal sanction and the great adventure of the Franciscan Order was launched.

Women, too, flocked to join him and three years later he founded for them a second order that came to be known as the Poor Clares after his first woman adherent Clare Offreduccio, a noblewoman of Assisi. Finally, in 1221, he formed the Third Order of Brothers and Sisters of Penance, a lay fraternity for those who, without withdrawing from the world or taking religious vows, wished to follow the principles of Franciscan life.

Meanwhile the men's order had grown rapidly and was no longer confined to Italy. In 1212 Francis had set out for the Holy Land but was shipwrecked in the Adriatic and was forced to return home. In 1219 he went to Egypt where the crusaders were besieging Damietta, and is said to have entered the Saracen camp and preached before the sultan.

Ill health, which was to dog him for the rest of his life, forced him to abandon projected visits to France and Spain. Besides, his presence was needed in Italy where the continual growth of the men's order made amplification and revision of the rule of the order imperative. The new and final version of the Franciscan rule was approved by Pope Honorius III in November 1223.

Exhausted by his many illnesses, which he called his "sisters" and the many penances he inflicted on "Brother Ass the body", Francis felt the need to withdraw from the external affairs of the order and in the summer of 1224 he went with three companions to the mountain retreat of La Verna, not far from Assisi. Here, as he prayed on the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, he saw a vision of a seraph with six wings. When the vision faded he found that his body bore the stigmata, the marks of the wounds of Christ, on his hands, feet and side.

As Christmas approached Francis returned to the Porziuncola and, despite constant illness and near blindness, he spent the first months of the year 1225 riding throughout Umbria on a donkey preaching to the people. With his eye condition worsening his companions took him to Rieti for medical treatment which proved unsuccessful. Then, after a brief stay in Siena, he was brought home to Assisi where, on October 3, 1226, he died at the Porziuncola. In 1228 he was canonized a saint by Pope Gregory IX. ■

▶ from God who assigns us mysterious tasks and has us encounter tragic conditions on our way through life. Grace is not a reward, it is only the promise of a reward, of salvation, the promise that our terror will be transformed into joy and jubilation.

Our poor man, or, more accurately, the poor man as we like to imagine him and deal with him, is a completely passive being. We mollycoddle the poor man, we send him to sleep, we do everything we can to relieve him of his moth-eaten coat of glory. We give him something in the hope that he will move on, and we even vouchsafe him a few words of advice so that he won't disturb our tranquillity. Saint Francis, on the contrary, sees the poor man as a king,

Our lives, such as we have lived and are living them, would appear to give the lie to the dream and the reality of Saint Francis and suggest that the natural character, normality and enormous importance of our temptations constitute basic proof of the vanity and laughable character of Saint Francis' dream, the dream of fraternity and of peace through fraternity.

Herein we find one of the most disturbing and at the same time splendid aspects of the Franciscan wanderings—the clear tendency to rebellion in the saint, the tendency to defer obedience to his own convictions. It would have been easy for him to place himself at the head of a movement which challenged the "Signor Papa" and his own bishop. But it was in this very context that Saint Francis understood that truth is indissociable from obedience and that obedience is very similar to the night of storm and cold, a chastising experience whose ultimate goal is the recuperation of liberty. It is important to note, however, that the obedience is not of a purely mechanical kind, nor can it be replaced by a facile escapism; it is an obedience, rather, which takes its toll in tears and blood.

The great story of Christianity has been written with this obedience as its main instrument, as Saint Francis, with his fear of heresy and the tempting spirit of contradiction, was well aware. Nor, for that matter, did he hesitate to bind his brothers to a scrupulous observance of evangelical principles and the teachings of the Church. The suspicion of theology arose from the idea that carnal pride could return to our hearts as the result of uncontrolled speculation.

What greater sacrifice could one ask of a man than that of submitting to the eradication of his own intelligence? We feel that God gave us our brains to use in any way we choose. Saint Francis, on the other hand, absolutely denies this. For him the intelligence is only a means of increasing the love of God, and should be placed at the disposal of whoever has been called upon to act as our guide.

The precepts and recommendations which his voice carries to us from that lost century have been tacitly avoided, silenced, for a long time—from the moment, in fact, that man began looking to his own interest and seeking an equilibrium which chance, our capacity for adaptation, and the illusion of being alone in the world, appear to have made possible. We have stifled or, for the moment, we appear to have stifled the cry of Cain, that very cry that Saint Francis strove to banish from our daily lives. Why render an account of our acts, why renounce the spirit of liberty, why make of obedience the very gateway

Saint John the Evangelist and Saint Francis of Assisi, by El Greco (early 17th century).

Photo © Anderson-Giraudon, Paris. Prado Museum, Madrid

as the thorn that makes our flesh bleed and, above all, as the face of truth.

In elaborating his teachings of love by contrasts, Saint Francis advances the spiritual meaning of poverty one stage further. He who hates us is a powerful figure, resembling us yet menacing our property area, trying to take from us our part of power, of glory, of ambition. And Saint Francis tells us that we should love him as ourselves, as if this rich man was in reality a poverty-stricken individual, as if in the image of this victor we could discover the face of the beaten and insulted Christ.

It might be conjectured that God sent Saint Francis into this world in the footsteps of Christ in order to offer us one more demonstration that the Gospels extol a utopia. And this affords us the opportunity to formulate a first objection to Saint Francis and to Jesus: why preach things which are so arduous, so difficult in fact as to be next to impossible to implement, and which two thousand years of world experience has shown to be so—if not totally, at least in part?

Saint Francis and Saint Dominic. Detail from a series of frescoes painted by Benozzo Gozzoli between 1450 and 1459 in the church of Saint Fortunatus at Montefalco, Umbria.

Photo © Anderson-Alinari, Rome

to prayer? Saint Francis asked and continues to ask much of us without ever speaking to us of what we will be given in exchange. At most he promises us "perfect happiness", something that nobody believes in these days. Like the Christ of the Gospels, the Saint does not lay before us hard and fast rules of salvation nor does he conjure up in our anguished minds the mirage of gardens of enchantment; we are merely men pointing out to other men terrestrial paradises which with time have come to form a single "Eden" where everything is fulfilled in murder and the exaltation of visible conquests.

The strain of madness in Saint Francis' preaching does not strike or affect us as it struck and affected his contemporaries, completely taken aback as they were by his desire to dispossess and strip clean. The effect on those who saw and heard him preach in the streets and squares was one of fury: he was at odds with the social model of his time. As to us, we do not remember him, we have eliminated him. What was madness, the madness of God, is today a curiosity. But perhaps we exaggerate. If he has remained in our memory for seven hundred years and if, from Dante up to the latest writers who from time to time have felt tempted to reinvoke his spirit, Saint Francis has appealed to our intelligence, it is because his path, temporarily dropped from our itineraries, is not yet closed.

Will Saint Francis return? For the moment we are limited to fantasizing concerning this possibility, to turning the question upside down in the form of an hypothesis: should he return. If he returns, if one day he knocks on our paper door, what will filter through the unending stream of other news, of other messages? How will we judge him and what will he himself find most surprising?

When Saint Francis knocks at our door (and this happens much more frequently than we suppose), we only half open it; we admit his legend into our homes and leave his truths outside—his patience, his pardon, his love. In the final analysis it is that love alone that joins and reunites us all. Why do we leave his truth of love outside? Simply because we are incapable of this love; the regime of consumerism, usury and exploitation, the rule of *do ut des* (I give that you may give) and the philosophy of life which follows from it, have as their primary objective the spirit of love, this "good" that we inscribe on our standards but which in reality we do not respect. This "good" is only for us and we do all we can to obtain it and to improve it on the practical level. But, as Saint Francis saw, it is never the good of others.

Saint Francis has lost, in the same way that his dreams of a human community freed from the harsh laws of economics have not prevailed. The efforts which have been made in other continents and which have been inspired by his more generous ambitions belong to written history and it is unlikely that they will manifest themselves again in written form. Industrialized societies have increased the factors of social contrast which were known in the time of Saint Francis, but let us not forget that he foresaw the importance of the problem and in his own way succeeded in breaking it down to its root causes.

■ **Carlo Bo**

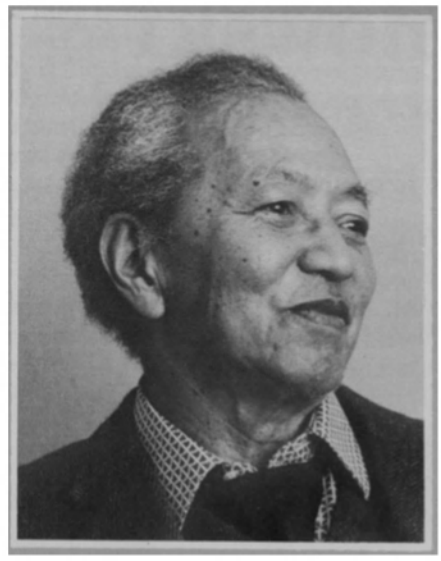


Photo © Louis Monier, Paris

Wifredo Lam
1902-1982

HE was tall, raw-boned, emaciated; one of those men whose skeletons seem visible through the flesh—like Don Quixote to whom he dedicated his autobiography and for whom he reserved a special corner of his heart as the embodiment of the ideal man. Yet despite his physical similarity to and love of "The Man from La Mancha", Wifredo Lam was not Spanish; he was a man of the tropics, a Caribbean, a Cuban to his fingertips.

Lam was born in 1902 at Sagua La Grande, Cuba, in the heart of a region whose long and determinant history of intermingling of peoples and cultures has made it, in Lam's own words, "a privileged geographical cross-roads, both a meeting point and a point of departure". By his birth Lam inherited the four basic elements of the Caribbean ethnic intermix: African, European and Indian, from his mother, and Chinese, from his father.

After starting his study of painting in Havana, Lam set out, in 1923, for Spain where he was to spend a crucial period of his life. "When I arrived in Madrid", Lam recounted later, "I was like a country bumpkin who had seen nothing. My first visit to the Prado was a revelation". Some thirteen years later, in 1936 and 1937, he played an active role in the defence of Madrid against Franco's forces, and at the end of 1937 he moved to Paris.

Soon after his arrival in Paris Lam met Picasso who introduced him to André Breton and other figures of the surrealist movement with which he was from then on closely associated. Lam's encounter with Picasso and the surrealists was to have a decisive impact on his work which was to be moulded by the twin influences of the European intellectual and artistic avant-garde and his deeply implanted Caribbean roots. It was not long before this fusion found material expression in the first of his major works.

In 1941, fleeing the Nazi invaders, Lam shipped out of Marseilles with several of his Parisian friends. In 1942 he reached Havana where the rediscovery, after an absence of eighteen years, of his native land and the Black culture into which he had been born galvanized his artistic imagination. In 1943 he completed his famous painting The Jungle *(see the* Unesco Courier, *December 1981) in which the imagery and the syncretic cult myths of Cuba (African animism—Spanish catholicism) found expression through European avant-garde forms with such imagination and explosive force that it provoked an uproar when exhibited in New York that same year.*

Lam remained in Cuba until 1952, when he returned to Paris which he was to make his permanent home. He continued, however, to make frequent trips to his native Cuba, especially after the 1959 revolution of which he had been a firm supporter from the start.

By this time his paintings had earned him a worldwide reputation and each new work enhanced his position as one of the great artists of an awakening Third World and as the voice of its oppressed and neglected cultures. Through the magic of his imagination the universe of the occult and the mysterious took on colour and shape, becoming aware of the fact of its own existence. Referring to The Jungle, *the French writer Alain Jouffroy wrote that "it was the first artistic revolutionary declaration of a Third World that already, it would seem, perceived the need to place all cultures on a common footing, and an augury of an awakening to this need on a world scale...* The Jungle *affirmed that there were no insuperable incompatibilities between peoples and that they are all intimately interlinked."*

Indeed, though Lam was a Caribbean and a man of the New World, he also belonged to the Old World. The upsurge of the Afro-Cuban heritage in the works of Lam's maturity occurred precisely because the very nature of the adventure of twentieth-century European art (we recall the discovery of "primitive" African art by Matisse and Picasso) had made it possible. Mestizo *in his origins, Lam was* mestizo *in his art, a quality that brought to his works a dynamism that kept it in perpetual ferment right to the end and imbued it with the rich joyousness of the adventure of Caribbean and modern art.*

Wifredo Lam died this year in Paris under a bright September sky.

Francisco Fernández-Santos

Szymanowski
a great composer rediscovered

by Jerzy Waldorff

GREAT creative artists and their works often have a chequered fate. Vivaldi's music was only discovered two centuries after its composer's death. Van Gogh, like many other painters, lived in poverty; today his paintings are valued at millions of dollars. In some cases outstanding creators are celebrated during their lifetime but after their death their works are temporarily and unjustly consigned to oblivion. This has been the fate of Karol Szymanowski, who was considered to be one of the great European composers in the 1930s.

Szymanowski was born on 3 October 1882 in the little town of Timoszowka on the border of the Ukraine and Podolia. It is a matter of coincidence that Joseph Conrad (Jozef Korzeniowski) the great English writer of Polish origin, the famous pianist and statesman Ignacy Paderewski, and the noted twentieth-century Polish writer Jaroslav Ivaszkiewicz were all born in this same region of Poland. Two famous women, Balzac's great love Ewelina Hanska, and Karolina Ivanowska (later the princess of Wittgenstein) who was the inspiration of Franz Liszt, also came from the same area.

Szymanowski had the good fortune to be born into a family which was deeply interested in the theatre, literature and above all music. They did not stand in the way of his vocation and allowed him to study in Warsaw where he made friends with the pianist Artur Rubinstein and the violinist Pawel Kochans. These brilliant performers later became the most faithful champions of Szymanowski's works in Europe and the United States.

Initially Szymanowski was influenced by Chopin and Scriabin. In 1902 his Study in B Flat, which Paderewski included in his repertoire, made him internationally known. After 1906 his symphonic works began to be played by the orchestras of Warsaw, Berlin and Vienna. In accordance with the traditional practice of that time, an ambitious patron and man of taste, Prince Wladislaw Lubomirski, offered him the hospitality of his palace in Vienna and recommended him to the "Universal Edition" publishing house which was to publish all his works except for the ballet *Harnasie,* the Fourth Symphonie Concertante, and the Second Violin Concerto, which appeared under the imprint of the Paris house of Max Eschig.

Szymanowski's compositions between 1906 and 1910 reflected his enthusiasm for the work of Max Reger, Richard Strauss, the impressionism of Debussy, and Arab music (which he discovered while travelling in Africa). But he soon found his own way, essentially Polish in inspiration.

After his journey to Africa Szymanowski visited Paris on the eve of the First World War where he met Claude Debussy, and London where he made the acquaintance of Igor Stravinsky. As described, not without humour, in Artur Rubinstein's memoirs, the meeting with the outwardly cold and aloof Stravinsky was not a success. Then Szymanowski returned home by one of the last trains in the summer of 1914. As the guns began to thunder in the West he was gripped by a fever of creativity and began to produce a flow of major works.

Left to right, Grzegorz Fitelberg, Karol Szymanowski and Artur Rubinstein, in Vienna, in 1912.

His First Violin Concerto, inspired by the Polish poet Tadeusz Micinski's *May Song,* is a hymn to love which rises against a background of inexpressible anguish. The Third Symphony (The Song of the Night) for orchestra, tenor and choir, is quite different; written to words by the great Persian Sufi poet Rumi (13th century AD) this gigantic work evokes the heaving of the ocean through its rich canvas of sound, and culminates in a meditation bordering on ecstasy: "God and I are alone..."

Mity (Myths) are a suite for violin and

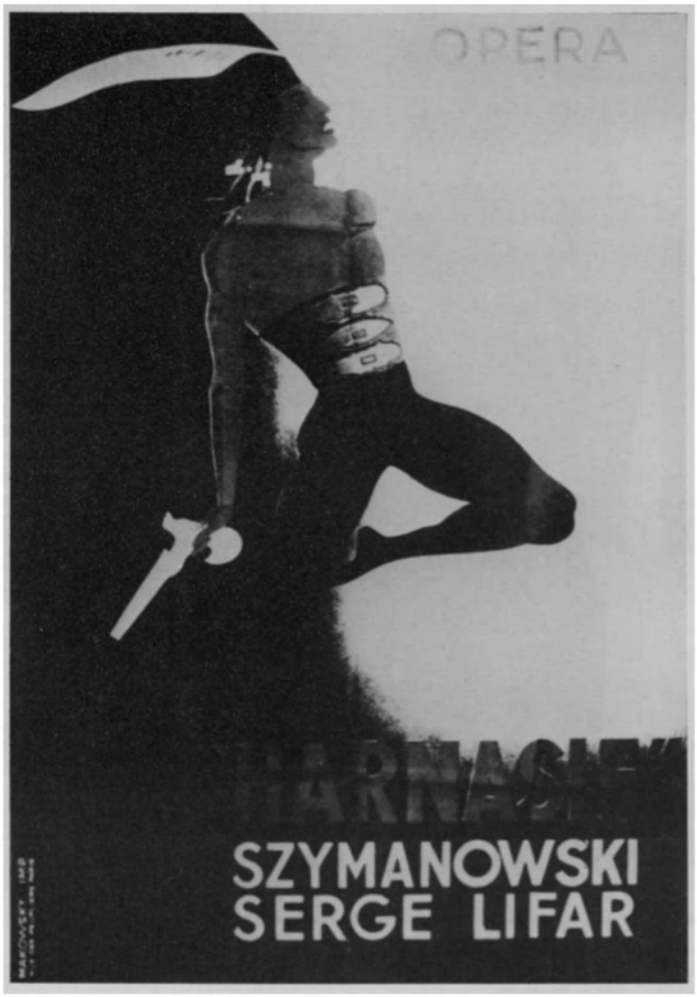
JERZY WALDORFF, *Polish essayist and critic, is Vice-Chairman of the Music Council of the Polish Ministry of Culture. He is the author of several books on music including two monographs on Karol Szymanowski.*

piano, the best-known piece being the demanding *Fountain of Arethusa.* On his way to Africa Szymanowski had spent some time in Sicily, still imbued with the heritage of "greater Greece", and where he discovered Antiquity. The *Myths* are a reflection of this revelation.

After the Treaty of Versailles the composer and his family returned from Elisavetgrad, where they had moved in 1917, to a Poland reborn. After 1920 his works increasingly drew inspiration from folklore—songs, dances, fiddler's improvizations, especially those of the mountain-dwellers of the Tatra massif. But when he introduces popular melodies and the rhythms of peasant dances into such compositions as the oratorio *Stabat Mater,* the ballet *Harnasie,* and the Fourth Symphonie Concertante, Szymanowski uses the same freedom and orchestral refinement as a Prokofiev, a Bartok or a Stravinsky.

He rarely abandoned the tonal system. In his rare atonal experiments he went close to the serial writing of Schoenberg, without however employing a complete twelve-tone system. He was attached above all to the originality of melodic lines and to their scintillation and *éclat,* wishing to express in music the profound and unchanging feelings of mankind. His sobriquet, "romantic of modernity", was fully deserved. As time went by, however, his technique became increasingly refined and rigorous. His oratorio *Stabat Mater,* universally considered to be a masterpiece, was produced when he was at the height of his powers.

Szymanowski's growing authority was recognized when he was appointed director of the Warsaw conservatory in 1927, but the envy of some of his fellow-musicians and government intrigues led him to resign in 1932. This was a blow from which he never recovered. But Szymanowski did not need direct classroom contact in order to influence such musicians as Grazyna Bacewicz, Witold Lutoslawski, Tadeusz Baird and Krzysztof Penderecki. Although at times they resisted Szymanowski's "romanticism" these young artists nevertheless profited from the lessons taught them by the work of their older contemporary.



Poster for the highly praised 1936 Paris performance of Szymanowski's ballet *Harnasie* which had received its première in Prague the previous year. In *Harnasie* Szymanowski used direct quotations from folk music coloured with echoes of Tatra mountain airs.

Photos © Polish Institute, Paris

While the master was encountering difficulties in his own country, elsewhere his successes were bringing him recognition as a leading figure in European music. In 1929 he was awarded the Order of the Italian Crown and in the following year he became a member of the Prague Academy of Sciences and Arts. In 1931 he was awarded the French Legion of Honour, and became an honorary member of the International Society for Contemporary Music, to which Richard Strauss, Manuel de Falla, Maurice Ravel, Stravinsky, Bela Bartok and others also belonged.

Between 1924 and 1926 Szymanowski's First Violin Concerto was performed by such musicians as Sampigny in Paris, Pawel Kochanski in New York, Stokowski and Huberman in Vienna. Between 1929 and 1937, the *Stabat Mater* was sung in Naples, Vienna, Brussels, Paris, Klagenfurt, Warsaw, New York, Dusseldorf and Chicago. The ballet *Harnasie* was performed between 1935 and 1937 in a concertante version in Cleveland and New York, and danced in Prague, Paris, Belgrade and Hamburg. Szymanowski himself was the soloist when his Fourth Symphonie Concertante for piano and orchestra was performed in Copenhagen, Moscow, Amsterdam, Bucharest, Stockholm, Paris and London.

Szymanowski's last great success also brought him great distress. In 1936 his ballet *Harnasie* was staged at the Paris Opera to choreography by Serge Lifar who danced the principal role. The critics unanimously showered praise on the composer. Unfortunately, a few days after the opening night, a fire broke out in the corridors and the ballet had to be transferred to the Théâtre des Champs Elysées. But there were no offers of further performances.

In 1937 Szymanowski died of tuberculosis, an illness he had contracted in childhood and one which was at that time often incurable.

Two years later the Second World War unleashed by Hitler swept through Europe, destroying Poland and erasing the great musician's name from memory. Then, with the return of peace a certain avant-garde which was in some cases more attached to tradition than to innovation slowed down the rediscovery of a composer who, formerly dubbed a "romantic" had in the meantime become a "classic" because of the vigour and beauty of his art.

In spring 1975 Szymanowski's opera *King Roger* was staged at Sadlers Wells in London by the New Opera Company. It was a triumphant success and set off a chain reaction, with more and more performances of *King Roger* being put on in various parts of the world. A recent example: Szymanowski's opera scored a triumph at the Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires in autumn 1981.

The centenary of Szymanowski's birth, inscribed on Unesco's world calendar of anniversaries, is a fitting moment to contribute to the revival of his music in a world which more than ever stands in need of the beauty and peace which music can bring. ■

Bharati, poet and patriot

by K. Swaminathan

Subramania Bharati with his wife.

Photo © Information and Public Relations Department, Government of Tamil Nadu, Madras.

INDIA is celebrating this year the centenary of Subramania Bharati (1882-1921), whom Tamils regard as a *Mahakavi* (Great Poet) and *Amarakavi* (Immortal Poet), and whom historians regard as one of the most authentic voices of modern India proclaiming the unity of the nation, its passionate longing for freedom and the human cry for universal brotherhood. In his brief working life of two decades, Bharati, as journalist, poet and patriot, brought about a revolution in Tamil literature and in the thinking of the Tamil people. He combined profound knowledge of and admiration for the eternal elements in the ancient Tamil tradition with a forward-looking acceptance of the ideal of human unity. Thus he brought Tamil prose and poetry into close contact with contemporary reality by using the language of common speech in his songs and poems dealing with current topics like indentured labour, the rape of Belgium, the great Russian Revolution and the demand for national integration and real *Swaraj* (independence).

Subramania was born on December 11, 1882, in Ettayapuram in Tirunelveli district of the then Madras Presidency. His father Chinnaswami Iyer was in the service of the local *Zamindar* or chieftain. Subramanian's mother died when he was an infant. The father wished his first son to become an English-educated officer or engineer. But the boy took little interest in such "bread-winning" studies and failed in the matriculation examination at the end of his high school course.

But even during school days he had created a stir among students and teachers by his spontaneous gift of versification. At 15, he was married to 7 year old Chellammal. He was then provided the sinecure job of reading daily newspapers to the local chieftain. About this time the title "Bharati" was conferred on him by a gathering of poets at a court function. Henceforth, literary circles knew him as Subramania Bharati or just "Bharati" (embodiment of Saraswati, Goddess of learning).

This idyll in his home-town was short-lived. Within a year, his father passed away, leaving the family in straitened circumstances. Bharati moved to Varanasi to be with his aunt there. The two years he spent in Varanasi brought about a great change in his outer personality and inner vision; he gained a sound knowledge of Sanskrit, Hindi and English; passed with credit the Entrance Examination of the Allahabad University; and read and enjoyed the English Romantic poets, especially Shelley.

In search of a livelihood, Bharati went back to Ettayapuram in 1901, where he taught Tamil in a high school for a short period. When Bharati was 22, he came into contact with G.Subramania Iyer, editor of a leading Tamil daily, *Swadesa Mithran,* published from Madras. The young man was invited to join the daily as a sub-editor. His fluency and facility as a translator enabled him to bring to the Tamil public the inspired utterances of Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo Ghose and Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Soon the rebel in Bharati drew him into the vortex of Indian politics. His original articles in his inimitable style espousing "extremism" were read widely. The next and final step was the transformation of Tamil poetry by Bharati's use of his unique lyrical power for the expression of modern ideas for rousing the pride and patriotism of the people.

K. SWAMINATHAN, *Indian educator and journalist, has been since 1960 chief editor of the "Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi", the Government of India's project to publish a multi-volume edition of Mahatma Gandhi's writings and speeches.*

Detail from a bronze sculpture representing the 9th-century Saivite poet and mystic Manikkavacakar and dating from about 950 AD. As a *Desika*, or supreme teacher, Manikkavacakar is always portrayed holding in his left hand a bundle of palm leaves on which are inscribed, in Tamil, the first words of one of his poems or, as here, the invocation pronounced before the singing of hymns of the temple of Chidambaram, a shrine held in high veneration in Tamil Nadu. Some thousand years later, another Tamil poet, Subramania Bharati was to write:

Ye foolish folk, who roam about
In search of myriad fancied gods,
Have ye not heard the myriad scriptures
Declare knowledge alone is God?

Photo R. Nagaswamy © Tamil Nadu State Archaeological Department, Madras

The movement against the British rule in India gained a new momentum with the partition of Bengal in 1905 and engulfed the whole country. The "moderate" *Swadesa Mithran* could not accommodate the fiery writings of Bharati. So he left it to join a new Tamil weekly *India* and threw in his lot with the extremist elements in the Indian National Congress which the British Government were trying to put down by arrests and imprisonment.

To avoid possible arrest, Bharati fled to Pondicherry which was then a French settlement in South India, and he continued to edit from there the weekly *India*. Then followed a period of grim trials and tribulations under the constant surveillance of the British and the French police. But there was ample recompense for these sufferings in his friendship with Sri Aurobindo, V.V.S. Iyer, Subramanya Siva and other patriots who too had sought refuge in Pondicherry. Though Bharati experienced moments of depression, poetry continued to be "the anchor of his purest thoughts, the nurse, the guide, the guardian of his heart, and soul of all his moral being".

Bharati came out of his self-exile on November 2, 1918, and was promptly arrested and kept in police custody for 24 days. However, on the intervention of some eminent public workers, he was conditionally released, and was soon back in his native district, Tirunelveli. His "extremism" had somewhat mellowed by then and he soon gravitated towards the teachings of Mahatma Gandhi. It was at this juncture that his old paper *Swadesa Mithran* welcomed him back to Madras. He lived in Triplicane, a suburb of Madras city, free for a while from abject poverty.

But soon came the end. In an attempt to befriend the temple elephant at Triplicane, he offered as usual a coconut to the animal unaware that it was in rut. Struck down by the mighty trunk and thrown aside, he suffered grave injuries. Though he was promptly rescued and taken to hospital, he lay seriously ill for a few days and passed away peacefully on September 12, 1921, at the age of 39.

Bharati has left behind an impressive and imperishable mass of poetry and prose. Beside his widely popular patriotic poems, special mention may be made of his exquisite love-lyrics and nature-poems, and his three masterpieces; *Kuyil Pattu* (an allegorical narrative), *Kannan Pattu* (lyrics in a variety of moods on Lord Krishna) and *Panchali Sapatham* (the Vow of Panchali, an epic fragment from the *Mahabharata* filled with thrilling contemporary overtones). ■

Right, 11th-century sculpture from East Bengal representing Sarasvati the Hindu goddess of learning and the arts. In one of her personifications she was given the name of Bharati, a title which was conferred on the great Tamil poet Subramania by a group of his fellow poets as a tribute to his talent. From then on he was known as Subramania Bharati, or simply, Bharati.

Photo © Bulloz, Paris

Hue, a city in peril

1

The history of Viet Nam

A new book by Mr. Lê Thành Khôi, a teacher at the Sorbonne and a Unesco consultant, presents the fullest portrait so far of the history of Viet Nam from its origins to 1858 (the date of French intervention). Drawing on the best Vietnamese, Chinese and European sources, and taking account of the most recent archaeological discoveries in Viet Nam, the author traces the development of Vietnamese civilization.

The earliest Vietnamese kingdom, Van Lang, appeared during the Bronze Age, some time in the seventh century BC. The dispersion pattern of the famous decorated drums of Dong-son reveals how its culture spread through southern China and south-east Asia. It shared many characteristics with other cultures of the region, including slash and burn farming, irrigation, the use of stone hoes and bronze ploughs, totemism, tattooing and building on piles.

Viet Nam was invaded by the Han in the second century BC, and for over a thousand years formed part of the Chinese empire which introduced iron and brought Confucianism and Taoism (Buddhism came from the south). But integration only went so far. Thanks to a vigorous and firmly established culture, to the economic base offered by the Red River delta, to a relatively numerous population and to the solid structure of their village communities, the Viet were able (and here, perhaps, they are a unique case among the peoples south of the Yangtze) to preserve their identity and their language and finally, after many vicissitudes, to recover their independence in the twentieth century.

The construction of the Vietnamese nation followed a dual rhythm: resistance to periodic invasions from the north, and the "march to the south" of a farming people which, pressing forward to conquer new lands, clashed first with the Chams and then with the Khmers. The monarchical system, at first "patrimonial" and based on the royal clan, became "bureaucratic" in the fifteenth century with Confucianism as the official doctrine and a corps of officials recruited by civil service examinations of a literary nature.

But after a period of vigour Confucianism lost its vitality. In the nineteenth century, before foreign intervention, a combination of intellectual rigidity, economic stagnation and social tensions which resulted in numerous peasant revolts, sounded the death knell of the monarchy. In literature, however, the eighteenth and early nineteenth century saw the flowering of Vietnamese poetry. The author traces the social significance of this poetry and translates some fine examples of it.

Mr. Lê Thành Khôi's work provides a unique synthesis of the political history and cultural development of Viet Nam. It is richly documented and illustrated: there are over a hundred illustrations of prehistoric objects, Dong-son drums, religious, civil and military architecture, sculpture, painting, ceramics and calligraphy. It is also an illuminating personal contribution to historical debate on such issues as the formation of Vietnamese nationality, the "feudal" or "Asiatic" nature of the ancient system of production, and the re-establishment of Vietnamese unity in the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

It is an indispensable reference book not only for specialists and teachers but for the general reader and all those who are interested in Viet Nam and want to understand in depth certain aspects of the situation there today.

Histoire du Viet Nam des Origines à 1858, by Lê Thành Khôi, Sudestasie, Paris, 1982, 452 pages.

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Once the capital of the Nguyen dynasty, the city of Hue, in Viet Nam, stands on the north bank of the River of Perfumes, twelve kilometres from the coast. Grouped within the "Imperial City" and the "Forbidden Purple City", which constituted the heart of the royal capital, are a number of early 19th-century buildings or remains of buildings of high artistic and architectural interest. To this huge urban architectural complex must be added the seven royal tombs, situated a few kilometres to the south of the city, with their temples, palaces and gardens. Today this shrine of Vietnamese culture is in a serious state of deterioration. In addition to the damage resulting from the terrible fire of 1947 and the fighting which took place there in 1968, the buildings are suffering from the encroachment of tropical vegetation and the ravages of time. At the end of the war, in 1975, the Government of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam began carrying out the most urgent provisional protection measures. In November 1981, within the context of Unesco's general aim of preserving the cultural heritage of mankind, Mr. Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow, the Director-General of Unesco, launched an international appeal for the preservation and restoration of the city of Hue. The initial stage of the long-term project adopted by the Unesco General Conference covers the restoration or reconstruction of fifteen monuments and two tombs over the period 1981 to 1986. Photos show: (1) The eastern entrance to the Imperial City; (2) The tomb of Minh Mang; (3) The gardens surrounding the tomb of Minh Mang; (4) The Mien Lac Cac pavilion of the Imperial City; (5) Interior of the Ta Vu, damaged by fire in 1947; (6) The mandarin's esplanade at the tomb of Khai Dinh.

Photos Vorontzoff, Unesco

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UNESCO NEWSROOM

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■ **Museums, heritage and cultural policies in Latin America and the Caribbean** is the theme of Unesco's quarterly *Museum* (Vol. XXXIV No. 2, 1982). Single issue 28 F; annual subscription 100 F.

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The International Center of Social Gerontology, Paris, has published the first volume of a 2-volume **International Bibliography of Social Gerontology.** Vol. 2 will be published very shortly. The bibliography covers 65 countries from all the world regions. Virtually all the 1,500 references are followed by a descriptive text in French and English. Price for the 2 volumes, postage included: 155 F for France, 160 F elsewhere in Europe, 175 F for other countries. Orders should be addressed to the International Center of Social Gerontology, 91, rue Jouffroy, 75017 Paris.

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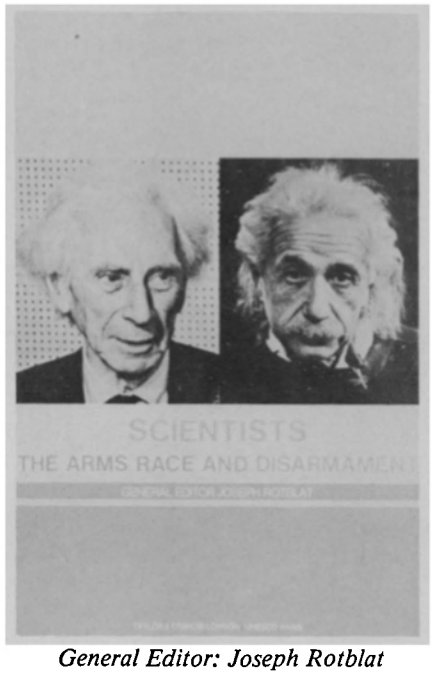

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323 pages 150 French francs

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